2:Sanders E-5 (no date) 1949 EEl Bulgaria EEl

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"The school is largely responsible for the change." *See page 72.*

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"... a wedding was a village affair ..." *See page 85.*

[Facing p 81]

2: Sanders E-5 (no date) 1949 EE1 Bulgaria EE1



second marriages were entered into because of convenience and necessity. But such tolerance was not shown to the previously unmarried. 587 837

In Dragalevtsy children married according to age, the oldest first. If a younger child wanted to marry before his brother, he had to buy permission, but in no case was a son or daughter supposed to have the customary wedding celebration before an older sister married, the only chance being an elopement followed by a very simple ceremony. 582

Most girls and men in Dragalevtsy married between the twentieth and the twenty-fifth year. At the time of the last census (1934) there were only one married man and eighteen married women under twenty. Men had begun to marry later than they had ten years before, although there seemed to be no such well-defined trend for the women.

Since marriage was the normal channel for sex expression, an enamored couple thought readily of a wedding. When they reached an understanding, they considered themselves engaged and sought parental approval. Of the thirty representative families that I studied, eighteen, or more than half, were engaged one week. Only two couples were engaged for longer than two weeks. 584

The engagement did not grant the couple any privileges of intimacy; indeed, the boy was not allowed to visit with the girl until the wedding. His sisters and relatives went to call upon her, or, if she had been stolen and was in his home, his parents kept the girl away from him until the day of the wedding. Therefore, the engagement period did not give the young couple any chance of getting better acquainted; it simply gave the families an opportunity to prepare for the wedding a week later. Whenever a wedding was to take place, someone usually sent a message to me at the College, and if possible I attended. As a foreigner I was attracted to those customs that were bizarre; so to offset this I persuaded three peasants of different ages and from different families to give me separately a complete description of the typical wedding. This showed me which points they thought most important and served as a check to my observations.

A wedding was a village affair, the parents of the girl inviting all of those who had previously invited them as well as those whose invitations they would like to receive. This meant the laying in of large 585

2:Sanders E-5 (no date) 1949 EE1 Bulgaria EE1



585 quantities of wine and *rakiya,* the hiring of musicians from Sofia, and the baking of many pies and loaves of bread. Of course, the women of the neighborhood shared in the excitement by helping both the parents of the bride and of the groom.

Before the church service all of the young people who could find a wagon went to the bride's house, and after certain formalities took her possessions to the home of the groom. The bony horses raced around the curves in a cloud of dust while the boys cracked whips and shot guns. The procession to the church went first to the home of the godparents, a point of special honor, then to the home of the groom, and finally to that of the bride. As in America, there was room for great variety in wedding procedures, according to the amount of money the families could afford to spend.

431 584 Another important aspect of a village wedding was the custom of presenting important guests with some sort of garment. The groom's family gave a shirt, a belt, or a handkerchief to each of its close relatives, but the bride had to have something ready for the relatives of both families. When she was eight or nine years old she began preparing these numerous presents, doing them all by hand. In return she received a small sum of money from each person she honored. At the first weddings I attended I failed, through ignorance of the custom, to live up to my part of the bargain, but that seemed to make no difference in the way the people felt toward me. They never came to remind me of the oversight, because with natural courtesy they did not want to make me, a guest, feel uncomfortable or embarrassed. One evening when I was visiting one of the families I knew best, I asked a twenty-year-old girl to show me her hope chest containing the presents that she intended to give away as well as those garments that she planned to keep for her own use. This is what the chest contained:

[574]

25 pairs of socks knitted by the girl
55 long white shirts of homespun cloth (half to be given away)
35 homespun belts to be given to unmarried men
15 face towels
15 headkerchiefs worn by married women
20 *sukmani,* or black jumper dresses (most to be kept by the girl)

This girl was by no means from a rich household.

2: Sanders E-5 (no date) 1949 EEl Bulgaria EEl



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This girl was by no means from a rich household.

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The church ceremony always took place on Sunday if neither the bride nor groom had been married before. On Saturday the groom, bearing up fairly well under the good-natured jibes of the officials and his friends, went to the *Obshtina* for a license. A little after sunset the intimate friends of the bride and groom carried water from three different fountains to the bride. After the first two trips she poured the water brought to her onto the ground, but when the company returned from the third fountain she kept the water to heat later on for washing her hair. I shall never forget accompanying a group of young people on such an occasion. The bride was from a distant village, had come to Dragalevtsy to help harvest grain, and had been stolen by one of the young men. She, of course, was taken straight to his home, whereupon the boy's father started on the thirty-mile journey to visit the girl's parents to get her hope chest and wedding finery. The girl herself had no chance to go home for a farewell visit, nor did she have a single friend with her for the wedding. She was a sad little figure that Saturday evening as she received the water from these kind but strange young people. We were all excited because the boy's father had not yet returned from the girl's home. As everyone expected a favorable reply, wedding preparations went on without any delay; but there was always the possibility, however slight, that these preparations might be in vain.

When the father did return with the consent of the girl's family, the wedding followed the usual procedure. Sunday was the big day, with the *horo* set for the morning. I left my room at the tavern about nine o'clock, after breakfasting on sliced bread, white cheese, and linden-leaf tea provided for me by Bai Penko. The *horo* had not yet begun, so I talked with the groom's father for more than an hour on the sunny porch. The bride was being dressed in a room on the first floor; women bustled in and out carrying garments, water, combs and brushes, and ribbons. Upstairs the groom was being shaved and spruced to the accompaniment of considerable horseplay. There was a noticeable difference of atmosphere in the two quarters: great solemnity and a certain sadness pervaded the lower room; hilarity, aided by considerable drinking, rang out from above. Several women who

2:Sanders E-5 (no date) 1949 EE1 Bulgaria EE1



585 were busily preparing the big meal to be served after the church ceremony every now and then rushed out with something for me to taste, with the groom's father insisting that I sample some of the choice wine or brandy purchased just for the wedding.

535 585 [184] The dance I had come to see did not begin until afternoon. It lacked the enthusiasm which I had learned to anticipate, but was nevertheless colorful: the girls and women wore their most beautiful costumes; the men were neatly dressed, some in army uniforms; the leader of the *horo* carried the Bulgarian flag of white, green, and red, taking care that it did not catch in the overhanging branches. (In time of war the colors are reversed with the red bar on top.) This dance really was the prelude to the gay procession which headed for the church about two-thirty. First came the musicians with their battered instruments; then the principals of the wedding, followed by the guests. The flag was there, as well as Bulgarian tricolor sashes over the shoulders of the men.

585 292 Ordinarily the bride was a gay figure in the procession, her somber black overdress brightened with huge silver belt buckles and cherished strings of thin gold coins handed down for generations from mother to daughter. Hair and face shining with cleanliness, she moved in her wedding procession, happy, although considerably confused by her prominent position. But this particular bride had no ornaments—(Had her parents refused to send them?)—except a flower over her ear and the usual short, coarse white veil on her head. She did have on real leather shoes, instead of the customary pigskin sandals, but that was the only elaboration of her costume. It was hard to get her to smile for her picture; but when her new brother and sister each took an arm to encourage her, the broad, rather dull face suddenly lit up and a pair of beautiful dark eyes looked shyly at my camera.

585 All the village turned out to see the procession pass. Swarms of children came racing down the principal streets at the sound of the music. Once we had entered the churchyard I learned that they were there to scramble for the candy and coins which were thrown in the air along with rice to symbolize sweetness, wealth, and productivity. But this came at the end of the ceremony, and the children stood

2: Sanders E-5 (no date) 1949 EE1 Bulgaria EE1



closely packed in the church as the wedding party entered to face the altar before a table in the center of the church. 585

The bride and groom had no more than taken their stand when a middle-aged woman hurried to place dough baked in the form of a male phallic symbol deep in the sash worn by the bride and another piece to represent the female organs around the waist of the groom. This was done half surreptitiously while the priest was busy about something else. [831]

As the ceremony began I realized as never before the important part played by godparents in the ritualistic and spiritual life of the village. They stood behind the bride and groom, who were attended by the groom's brother as *dever,* or best man. The young couple shifted from foot to foot, each holding a bunch of flowers in one hand and a large burning taper in the other. The priest read from the Bible in his beautiful rich tones about the wedding at Cana of Galilee, and then asked God's blessing upon the couple. [608]

At this point the priest stepped out of his role and said to me: "Would you like to take a picture now?" Then when I was set for a time-exposure, he said to the crowd: "Everybody, quiet!" My act done, he told the godparents to assist in the changing of the rings from bride to groom, as well as the fragile, bright crowns previously placed upon the heads of the couple. In addition, the priest, as part of the ritual, passed around the chalice so the young couple, the best man, and the godparents could sip the wine. These same people then followed the priest in a walk around the table on which a cross and the Holy Scriptures rested. Three times around they went, stopping four times during each circuit to symbolize north, east, south, and west. At each of these twelve stops the party bowed over the table and its sacred relics. It was during this walk that the godmother tossed the rice, candy, and coins in the air for the children.

Such a brief account fails to include much of the liturgy which was an important part of the Orthodox Church's ceremony, but the peasant accounts of a wedding skimmed over this as being either unimportant or else a topic about which they were uninformed. In fact, most of the men accompanying the bridal party to the church remained outside during the ceremony. The parents of the groom

2:Sanders E-5 (no date) 1949 EEl Bulgaria EEl



● 585 had no important part to play, and, of course, the parents of the bride did not attend because of the distance.

The musicians began to play as soon as they saw the people coming from the church, and the procession formed again and went back to the groom's home over a different route, for it was considered unlucky to retrace the route. Back at the house a *horo* began with the liveliness I had always associated with the wedding dances. While many of the guests danced, others with special invitations went into the house to eat what had been so laboriously prepared over open hearths and sheet metal stoves. About dark the young couple were led to their room and left alone with the best man on guard by the door. An old custom, now falling into disuse, required the groom after intercourse to present the undergarment of the bride to the best man as a proof of her virginity. In the old days this was passed from guest to guest in a flour sieve so that all could be personally assured of the fact. But in the case of this young couple that custom was not observed. Word did get around that the groom was satisfied with his bride; if he had not been, then she could have been sent home in disgrace and the wedding called off—that is, provided he had not been guilty of previous incontinence with her. The groom's parents in their joy passed "sweet brandy" around for all the guests to drink.

Early in the morning the bride came out for the rest of the ceremonies. She was taken to the chopping block underneath the nut tree to demonstrate her ability to wield the axe. The godmother then took her bridal veil, wound it on a stick, and touched some of the other village girls in the belief that they would soon get married. [292] In place of the veil the godmother tied a kerchief, brown in this case, over the girl's head to show that the wearer was married. The bride was then sent to the fountain for water of which all had to drink. The musicians were aroused from their befuddled sleep and told to strike up some lively music; the blaring horns and the beating drum woke the whole neighborhood, and then the whole village, as another procession began. This time all were headed for a wedding breakfast at Bai Penko's tavern, where they sat outside, just beneath my window. The first thing I noticed was the brown kerchief which, with the cheap

2: Sanders E-5 (no date) 1949 EE1 Bulgaria EE1



gold ring on her finger, symbolized what a tremendous change had taken place in the life of the bride. A week before she had been a girl gathering wheat in the company of other girls; now that kerchief separated her from these former friends and meant that she was a daughter-in-law in a strange home, in a strange village, married to a strange man. But for this she had been born; there was no reason or precedent to complain, no matter how disturbed her emotions might be.

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2:Sanders E-5 (no date) 1949 EE1 Bulgaria EE1

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## CHAPTER VI

## MARRIAGE

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THE BULGARIAN groom settled down naturally into the role of the married man as the embarrassment of the first few days of good-natured joshing wore away. He took less and less interest in the Sunday afternoon promenade, preferring to sit in front of the tavern with the other married men where he liked to be complimented on the woman he had chosen in the same way that he would appreciate compliments on a cow just bought. However, as marriage progressed he began to respect his wife as a person rather than as a possession.

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It was when the first child arrived, in a year or so, that the husband suddenly felt a sense of tremendous importance. He was no longer just a married man; he was a father. Though the beginning of married life had little effect upon his behavior, the fact of parenthood changed even his facial expression, his earnestness in his work, and his whole attitude toward the future. I sensed this often in the requests that people made for photographs. Few young men came to ask for pictures of their brides; but many wanted pictures of their infants, especially of the sons. In the case of the first child they would hold him up squarely in front of the camera so that he would fill up the whole picture if possible. But as children continued to arrive year after year, the fathers often asked, "Could we get our new oxen into the picture too?"

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Most of the men accepted marriage as they did the weather: inevitable, sometimes balmy and sometimes disagreeable, but utterly essential. They did not go out of their way particularly to adjust themselves to marriage, and spoke little of marriage. They patiently waited for parenthood, which was revolutionary in its effect upon them